

New exhibition explores the dialogue between Sufism and sound



Setār (lute). Iran, 20th century. Wood inlaid with bone and horn, engraved with the maker's mark and signature, plant fibers, metal strings. Photo: Jean-Yves Lacôte



PARIS.— The Musée d'Art et de Culture Soufis MTO® (MACS MTO®), the first museum dedicated to the art and culture of Sufism, opened in the Paris suburb of Chatou last September. MACS MTO aims to offer a platform for cultural exchange, social interaction, and spiritual discovery.

Spanning the Achaemenid Empire (6th-4th centuries BCE) to the present day, the museum's collection includes sculpture, textiles, calligraphy, ceramic and mirror mosaics, and site-specific installations emblematic of Sufi themes and spiritual symbolism. Highlights include a monumental granite kashkūl sculpture—a symbolic vessel representing spiritual emptiness and receptivity—and a collection of khirqa, wool cloaks passed between Sufi masters that embody humility and spiritual transmission. A programme of contemporary art exhibitions, talks, events and workshops, reveals the rich contribution Sufism has made to global art and culture throughout history, from the musical traditions inspired by poets such as Rumi to its impact on architecture.

Resonant: Bodies, Songs, and Strings, the next exhibition in the museum's programme opening to the public on the 6th June 2025, is an immersive project that explores how knowledge circulates through sound, vibration, and listening. Conceived as both a sensory and introspective experience, the exhibition brings together contemporary artworks in conversation with a selection of Sufi pieces from the museum's permanent collection.

Works by fourteen international contemporary artists, some of whom are exhibiting in Paris for the first time, will be on display in this exhibition. The exhibition features new commissions by artists Rada Akbar, Brook Andrew, Meris Angioletti, Paula Valero Comín, JJJJerome Ellis, Marie-Claire Messouma Manlanbien, and Sara Ouhammadou, with additional works by Nevin Aladağ, Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu, Célia Gondol, Yoshimi Futamura, Guadalupe Maravilla, Vesna Petresin and Charwei Tsai.

Curated by Elena Sorokina and Simona Dvorák, with curatorial advisors Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and the Initiative for Practices and Visions of Radical Care (RCI), the exhibition invites visitors on a meditative journey where sound, vibration, and listening become tools of transmission, healing, and collective memory.

The exhibition unfolds across three floors through installations, sound works, and ritual objects. Each floor explores a theme, the first 'transmissions of knowledge', the second 'the resonant body' and the third 'sound as healing'.

On the first floor, works by Yoshimi Futamura, Meris Angioletti, Paula Valero Comín, Sara Ouhammadou, and Charwei Tsai are presented with Sufi objects from the museum's collection, including rosaries, calligraphy, and kashkūl—revealing the links between sound, 'symbolic forms', and meaning.

Engaging with Sufi practices of teaching and transmission, featured artists on the second floor—Rada Akbar, Célia Gondol, JJJJerome Ellis, Marie-Claire Messouma Manlanbien, and Vesna Petresin—enter into dialogue symbolic Sufi instruments, manuscripts, and poetic texts, all set against the backdrop of the museum's Persian garden. At the heart of this constellation is the setār, a traditional stringed Sufi instrument. It becomes a powerful metaphor for the human body: a resonant chamber that receives, amplifies, and transmits vibrations that move beyond the realm of language.

On the third floor, sound emerges as a force of transformation. Nevin Aladağ, Brook Andrew, Katy'taya Catitu Tayassu, Guadalupe Maravilla, with additional works by Yoshimi Futamura and visual scores by JJJJerome Ellis blur the boundaries between body, music, and spirit. From multi-sensory installations to sonic rituals, the artists demonstrate how sound can mend, connect, and carry meaning forward, revealing knowledge as a shared vibration.